

Message Text

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SUBJECT: DIET SESSION AND LOCAL ELECTIONS DOMINATE POLITICAL
SCENE IN MONTHS AHEAD

1. SUMMARY: JAPANESE DOMESTIC POLITICAL SCENE FROM NOW THROUGH
APRIL WILL BE DOMINATED BY DIET SESSION (WHICH RESUMED
JANUARY 24) AND BY SERIES OF LOCAL ELECTIONS. HOW EFFECTIVELY
MIKI GOVERNMENT HANDLES DIET PROCEEDINGS AND HOW WELL LDP
FARES IN ELECTIONS CAN HAVE SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON STAYING POWER
OF MIKI CABINET. END SUMMARY.

2. DIET RESUMED SESSION ON JANUARY 24 AFTER LONG NEW YEAR'S
RECESS. IT IS SCHEDULED TO CLOSE ON MAY 25, AND PRIME MINISTER
HAS EXPRESSED STRONG DESIRE THAT SESSION NOT BE EXTENDED BEYOND
THAT DATE.

3. FIRST ITEMS ON DIET AGENDA ARE PRIME MINISTER'S POLICY SPEECH
(SEPTTEL) AND ADDRESSES BY OTHER CABINET OFFICERS ON FOREIGN
AFFAIRS, FISCAL MATTERS AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS. FOLLOWING
SPEECHES, MIKI WILL FACE FIRST REAL TEST IN LEGISLATIVE
ARENA WHEN HE AND CABINET MINISTERS RESPOND TO THREE DAYS OF
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PLENARY SESSION INTERPELLATION BEGINNING JANUARY 27.

FOCUS WILL THEN SHIFT TO BUDGET COMMITTEE HEARINGS WHERE GOVERNMENT LEADERS WILL HAVE TO HANDLE COMPREHENSIVE QUESTIONING BY DIETMEN FOR APPROXIMATELY ONE WEEK ON VARIETY OF BUDGET-RELATED MATTERS.

4. CHIEF CABINET SECRETARY IDE TOLD CABINET ON JANUARY 21 THAT 61 BILLS (34 OF THEM BUDGET-RELATED) AND 14 TREATIES WILL BE CONSIDERED IN CURRENT DIET SESSION. BILLS REPORTEDLY INCLUDE THOSE TO INCREASE POSTAL RATES, TO REVISE ANTI-MONOPOLY LAW, AND TO CHANGE POLITICAL FUNDS CONTROL AND PUBLIC OFFICES ELECTION LAWS. TWO DEFENSE BILLS RELATING TO SMALL SDF PERSONNEL INCREASES AND BENEFITS FOR ENLISTED MEN WILL ALSO BE CONSIDERED. TREATIES INCLUDE JAPAN-CHINA SHIPPING AGREEMENT. HOWEVER, ALTHOUGH FOREIGN MINISTER MIYAZAWA TOLD PRESS ON 21ST THAT NPT WOULD ALSO BE INCLUDED, WE KNOW THAT CONSENSUS HAS NOT BEEN ACHIEVED IN LDP AND IT IS STILL NOT CERTAIN THAT NPT WILL, IN FACT, BE CONSIDERED DURING THIS SESSION.

5. BUDGET WILL PROVIDE POINT OF DEPARTURE FOR CLOSE QUESTIONING AND CRITICISM OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS BY OPPOSITION PARTIES ON WHOLE RANGE OF ISSUES RUNNING FROM ECONOMIC AND FISCAL POLICIES TO POLITICAL REFORM AND SOCIAL WELFARE ISSUES. OPPOSITION PARTIES HAVE PREDICTABLY CRITICIZED BUDGET AS FAVORING BIG BUSINESS, NOT COPING WITH INFLATION, AND FAILING TO PROVIDE SUFFICIENT SOCIAL WELFARE BENEFITS. IN ADDITION TO BUDGET AND OTHER LEGISLATIVE MATTERS, OPPOSITION WILL PROBABLY SEEK TO RESURRECT QUESTION OF ALLEGED FINANCIAL IMPROPRIETIES BY FORMER PRIME MINISTER TANAKA AND TO EXPLOIT ALLEGATIONS CONCERNING ACTIVITIES OF ITI MINISTER KOMOTO BEFORE HE TOOK OFFICE. MUCH OF THIS, OF COURSE, DERIVES LESS FROM CONCERN WITH INTRINSIC IMPORTANCE OF ISSUES THAN WITH IMPACT ON VOTERS IN COMING ELECTIONS.

6. IN ADDITION TO TESTING IN DIET, MIKI GOVERNMENT FACES SERIES OF LOCAL ELECTIONS. BETWEEN JANUARY 26 AND FEBRUARY 9, EIGHT GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS ARE SCHEDULED, THESE TO BE FOLLOWED IN MID-FEBRUARY BY IMPORTANT MAYORAL ELECTIONS IN KYOTO AND HIROSHIMA. THEN ON APRIL 13, IN SO-CALLED UNIFIED LOCAL ELECTIONS. 17 PREFECTURES (INCLUDING TOKYO, KANAGAWA, OSAKA, FUKUOKA, AND HOKKAIDO) WILL ELECT GOVERNORS AND PREFECTURAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ASSEMBLYMEN. SOME MAYORS AND CITY ASSEMBLYMEN WILL BE CHOSEN SAME DAY WITH MORE TO BE ELECTED APRIL 27. LDP LEADERS ARE NOT OPTIMISTIC, BUT WILL BE SATISFIED IF THEY CAN AVOID MAJOR SETBACKS.

7. COMMENT: WITH STAYING POWER OF MIKI GOVERNMENT STILL IN QUESTION, DIET SESSION AND LOCAL ELECTIONS TAKE ON ADDED IMPORTANCE AS FACTORS INFLUENCING PRIME MINISTER'S ABILITY TO

REMAIN IN OFFICE FOR FULL THREE YEAR TERM. ALONG WITH
FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE OF HIS HANDLING OF ECONOMIC PROBLEMS (IN-
CLUDING AT LEAST INDIRECTLY, OUTCOME OF SPRING LABOR STRUGGLE)
AND HIS ABILITY TO MAINTAIN "CLEAN" PUBLIC IMAGE, HOW SUCCESSFUL
MIKI AND ASSOCIATES ARE IN DEALING WITH DIET AND HOW SUCCESS-
FUL LDP IS IN LOCAL ELECTIONS ARE FACTORS CERTAIN TO HAVE
MAJOR IMPACT ON PRIME MINISTER'S ABILITY TO RETAIN REINS OF
GOVERNMENT UNTIL NEXT GENERAL ELECTION NOW EXPECTED IN FALL
(ALTHOUGH POSSIBLY AS EARLY AS JUNE).
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